1: Roth--128 [2] (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 764

"As the members of d'Entrecasteaux's expedition, with one exception, did not anywhere come across human bones, they concluded that the natives buried their dead (Rossel, I. ch. iv. p. 56). Some human bones were once found amongst the ashes of a fire made by the natives. Several bones of the pelvis were pronounced by their form to have been part of the skeleton of a young woman; some of them were still covered with pieces of broiled flesh (La Billardière, I. ch. v. p. 205)."

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"It was left to Péron to make the remarkable discovery, at Cape Maurouard, of the very curious way in which the aborigines buried some of their dead. 'On a large piece of green sward, under the shadow of some old Casuarinas, a cone was raised, roughly made of bark, fixed into the ground at the lower end, and joined at the top by a band of the same materials. Four long poles, fixed at one end in the ground, served to support all the bark under which they were placed: these four poles seemed also intended to serve as an ornament to the structure; for instead of being united at the top like the bark, and so forming a simple cone, they were crossed at a little more than half of their length, that is to day, precisely at the point of their projection beyond the roof of the monument. From this arrangement a sort of tetragonal pyramid resulted, on the apex of [129] which appeared an inverted cone.... At each of the four sides of this pyramid there was a broad strip of bark, of which the two ends were bound below by the big band which bound all the others at the top. The result was, that each of these four strips formed a sort of bow, more pointed at the lower end, and large and rounder on the top; as each of these bows corresponded with one of the sides of the pyramid, it can be easily imagined what elegance and picturesqueness such an arrangement would offer.... I took off some of the thick pieces of bark and easily penetrated right under the cover. The whole of the upper portion was free; at the bottom there was a large flattened cone, formed of a light and

fine grass, arranged, with much care, in concentric and very deep layers.... Eight small wooden wands, crossing one another at the top of this cone of grass, served to hold it together; every wand had its end pushed into the ground, and was held down by a large piece of flat granite.... Hardly had I raised some of the upper layers of grass when I perceived a large heap of white ashes which appeared to have been collected with care; I plunged my hand into the middle of them; I felt something which resisted more strongly; I wished to draw it out; it was a human jaw-bone, on to which some shreds of flesh were still adhering.... This verdure, these flowers, the protecting trees, the deep layer of young grass which covered the ashes, all united in convincing me that I had just discovered a tomb. As I removed the ashes, I noticed a very black, friable, and light charcoal; I recognized animal charcoal; at the same moment I drew out a portion of a femur with some shreds of flesh; one could still distinguish fragments of large arteries full of calcined blood, reduced to that state at which this fluid resembles a resinous substance. These first bones were succeeded by others no less recognizable; vertebrae, fragments of the tibia, humerus, tarsal and carpal bones, etc., they were all much changed by fire, and were easily reduced to powder.... These bones were not lying, as I had at first thought, simply on the surface of the earth; they were collected at the bottom of a circular hole, 40 to 48 centimetres (15 to 18 inches) in diameter, and 21 to 27

centimetres (8 to 10 inches) deep.... At the foot of the hill on which this monument was erected, there was a brook of sweet, fresh, and limpid water.... This monument, the only one we had been able to discover on these shores, appeared to have been a memorial structure.... The tomb which I had just been observing was situated in that part of Eastern Bay which alone could have afforded [130] us fresh water; at this same point, also, the large shell-fish, which formed the aborigines' daily food, was more abundant. This presumption with regard to the deliberate choice of the position of the tomb was strengthened by an observation I made on the following day in Oyster Bay, regarding a similar structure, which was also placed on an eminence, at the foot of which ran a fresh-water stream, the only one we had been able to discover along the whole stretch of the latter bay. The same feeling, therefore, which consecrated these monuments, caused them to be erected in the most interesting and cherished spots, and where, brought thither frequently by his wants, man would most strongly experience the desire for commemoration.... The drawing of this tomb, made with great exactitude by M. Petit and finished by M. Lesueur, leaves nothing to be desired regarding the details of this structure and the pleasant view from the hill on the top of which it was situated."

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"I have spoken of a second tomb which we visited next day in Oyster Bay.... I will describe in a few words its peculiarities. Placed on a slight eminence, at the foot of which ran a fresh-water stream, ... this second monument differed in the main but little from the one I have just described; but being older than the former, its shape was less regular; the poles which should have supported the bark had fallen with it; the grass covering the ashes was greatly changed by the moisture of the atmosphere: otherwise, the bones and ashes were arranged in much the same way as those in the tomb at Eastern Bay. The only peculiarity deserving of careful note was, that on the inner surface of some of the best and largest pieces of bark some characters were crudely marked, similar to those which the aborigines tattooed [sic] on their forearms.

'From the nature of these monuments one must not be surprised at the small number of them met with. The bark protecting them is soon destroyed by the action of the atmosphere or dispersed by the winds. The tender grass which covers the ashes is not long in decomposing; and the ashes themselves, partially scattered, would soon present the appearance of a fire having been recently lighted there; and, as the bones had been collected at the bottom of a hole, they remain naturally buried, and would not be met with on the surface of the earth. Added to which, the thorough burning they had been subjected to necessarily hastened their decomposition and complete annihilation' (Péron, ch. xiii. pp. 265-273)."

"The only other account of a sepulchre is given by Braim [131] (II. ch. vi. pp. 266-269), taken from Jorgensen's Journal: 'Mungo, our black guide, ... conducted us to a number of large rocks...extremely difficult of access. Under one of these projecting rocks, we found a species of cave, where Mungo pointed to a heap of flagstones, round which were placed, in a very compact manner, pieces of gum-bark, the whole appearing as a small pyramid. This was a grave, and in the middle of it was deposited a spear, pointed to the depth of two feet, and the upper end of it pointed with a human bone. We opened the grave with our bayonets, and, in so doing, met with several layers of flat stones.... At the bottom, we found some human bones, which, from the state they were in, clearly indicated that they had for a long time remained in the grave.... Mungo did not behold unmoved our sacreligious invasion of the solemn and silent repository of one of his countrymen, whom he described as a great warrior from the circumstances of his burial. When I asked Mungo the reason of the spear being struck into the tomb, he replied quietly, "To fight with when he is asleep." He also confirmed the opinion that the aborigines buried their dead in an erect position.'"

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"Milligan (Beacon, pp. 30-31) says: 'Some of the tribes were in the habit of burning the remains; in which the ashes were sometimes taken up very carefully, and carried about as an amulet, to ward off sickness, and to insure success in hunting and in war. Other tribes placed their dead in hollow trees, surrounded with implements of the chase and war, building them in with pieces of wood gathered in the neighbourhood; while others would look out for natural graves, made by the upturn of large trees, and there deposit the bodies of their dead, leaving them but slightly covered with stones and loose earth.' According to Holman (IV. ch. xii. p. 404): 'If they cannot find a tree which decay has fitted for their purpose, they, by the use of fire, procure a cavity sufficiently large for the occasion.' 'Other tribes, again, when it was not convenient to carry off the dead body to some place of interment, would put it into some hollow tree, in as upright a position as possible; and to preserve him in this position, a spear was stuck through his neck into the tree. Another spear was left with the dead' (Braim, II. ch. vi. p. 268)."

"Mr. Meredith, in describing the only instance he knew of in which a native lost his life at the hands of the whites, says: 'The man who had the gun fired at the foremost native, and shot him dead: the others ran to their fallen companion, and our men escaped.' Afterwards these [132] Europeans 'returned to the place where the black was shot. The other natives had dragged his body into a hollow tree, and covered it with dead wood, but none of them were then to be seen' (pp. 199-200). Gilbert Robertson's words (Colonies and Slaves, p. 48) are to the same effect. Davis (p. 417) does not quite agree with the above accounts; he says: 'When a death occurs in a tribe, they place the body upright in a hollow tree, and (having no fixed habitations) pursue their avocations. When some time has passed, say a year or upwards, they return to the place and burn the body, with the exception of the skull; this they carry with them, until they chance (for I do not think they lose much time in seeking it) to fall in with a cemetery, in which a number of skulls are heaped together, when they add the one with them to the number, and cover them up with bark, leaves, etc. They do not bury them in the ground. I have never been able to ascertain that they put either weapons or food in the tree with the dead.' The same author continues (p. 418): 'During the whole of the first night, after the death of one of their tribe, they will sit around the body, using rapidly a low continous recitation to prevent the evil spirit from taking it away. They are extremely jealous of this ceremony being

witnessed by strangers; but I had, upon one occasion, an opportunity of being an ear-witness of it the whole night.'"

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"The lighting of a funeral pyre is thus described by Backhouse, who was on the spot shortly after the event occurred at the aboriginal settlement after the war. He says (p. 105): 'One of the women died. The men formed a pile of logs, and at sunset placed the body of the woman upon it, supported by small wood, which concealed her, and formed a pyramid. They then placed their sick people around the pile, at a short distance. On A. Cottrell, our informant, inquiring the reason of this, they told him the dead woman would come in the night and take the "devil" out of them. At daybreak the pile was set on fire, and fresh wood added as any part of the body became exposed, till the whole was consumed. The ashes of the dead were collected in a kangaroo skin, and every morning, before sunrise, till they were consumed, a portion of them was smeared over the faces of the survivors, and a death song sung, with great emotion, tears clearing away lines among the ashes. The store of ashes, in the mean time, was suspended about one of their necks.... A few days after the decease of this woman, a man, who was ill at the time, stated that he should die when the sun [133] went down, and requested the other men would bring wood and form a pile. While the work was going forward, he rested against some logs that were to form part of it, to see them execute the work: he became worse as the day proceeded and died before night. The practice of burning the dead is said to have extended to the natives of Bruny Island; but those of the east coast put the

deceased into hollow trees, and fenced them in with bushes. They do not consider a person completely dead till the sun goes down!'

According to West (II. p. 91): 'A group of blacks was watched in 1829, while engaged in a funeral. A fire was made at the foot of a tree; a naked infant was carried in procession, with loud cries and lamentations; when the body was decomposed in the flames, the skull was taken up by a female, probably the mother. The skull was long worn, wrapped in kangaroo skin.'"

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"On one occasion Robinson, the protector, found on his return that a woman having died, her body had been immediately burned by her husband. He mentions that the body was placed in a sitting posture. The husband's turn was soon to come. This dying man had a keen perception of his approaching end, and when he knew it was at hand, his last desire was to be removed into the open air to die by his fire. Robinson says he was busy preparing for his departure for Hobart Town for medical assistance, when the groans of this man ceased, and with them the noise of the other natives. 'A solemn stillness prevailed. ...I went out when he had just expired. The other natives were sitting round, and some were employed in gathering grass. They then bent the legs back against the thigh, and bound them together with twisted grass. Each arm was bent together, and bound round above the elbow. The funeral pile was made by placing some dry wood at the bottom, on which they laid some dry bark, then placed some more dry wood, raising it about [sic] two feet six inches above the ground; a quantity of dry bark was then laid upon the logs, upon which they laid the corpse, arching the whole over with dry wood, men and women assisting in kindling the fire, after which they went away, and did not approach the spot any more that day. The next morning I went with them to see the remains...; they were then collected and burnt. I wished them to have burnt the body on the same spot where his body had been burnt, ...but they did not seem at all willing, so I did not urge it. After the fire had been burnt out, the ashes were scraped together, and covered over [134] with grass and dead sticks' (Calder, Journ. pp. 16-18)."

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"This haste to get the dead bodies of their friends burned as soon as possible is referred to by Braim (II. ch. vi. p. 226): 'Those to the south were burned, a large pile of wood having previously been heaped up and set fire to; for scarcely was the body dead before it was placed among the flames, and even when it appeared that a native could not long survive, preparations were made for consuming the body the very moment life had fled.' He adds: 'The aborigines could assign no other reason for burying their dead in an erect posture except custom.'

'Among themselves they have no funeral rites' (Widowson, p. 191)."

1: Roth--150 [2] (No date) 1890 Tasmanians
116, 531, 764

"In the tomb discovered by Péron (ch. xiii. p. 273) the inner surfaces of some of the best and largest pieces of bark were crudely marked with characters similar to those which the aborigines tatooed on their fore-arms."